

give us the financial support the extra expense and work of getting up such an original column will entail, we will at once carry into effect the wishes of our Chess Editor, and each week publish a Chess Column that will prove to outsiders that Nova Scotia has talent sufficient to take high rank from the originality and ability of its players. Chess clubs should be started in every city and town in the Province, and if such are formed we know that our Chess Editor will aid them by all means in his power, not only by the giving of good advice, but also by furnishing information as to the best methods of organizing and working. Chess players who now take an interest in our Chess Column, should aid us by calling the attention of their friends and fellow Chess players to the inducements we offer, and in this way, by the increase in our list of subscribers, we shall feel amply repaid for any extra outlay we may be called upon to make. Our circulation is at present close upon 5,000 weekly, but we intend to spare no efforts to double that number, and, with this end in view, we shall always try to make our columns interesting and instructive.

Our Checker department has been equally successful with the Chess. Mr. W. Forsyth, the editor, is known as the leading Checker player of the Province, and under his skillful selection many interesting problems have already appeared in our columns. In all portions of the Province Checkers is a favorite game, and in furnishing its devotees with new and original matter tending to elucidate the game, Mr. Forsyth has formed for himself and THE CRITIC many new friends.

From time to time, as opportunity occurs, or as the editors suggest, we desire to introduce improvements in both the Chess and Checker departments, but it will be impossible to do what we wish unless we receive prompt evidence, in the shape of additional subscriptions, that sufficient interest is felt in the matter to justify us in incurring the necessary expense.

THE ALTERNATIVES.

The great debate in the Commons on Reciprocity is over, and it is doubtful whether, after all, the country is much enlightened by it. The real questions at issue are so obscured by the ex-parte treatment of the subject by the opposite sections of political advocacy, and by the lack of reliable statistics on certain points, such as the assumed magnitude of the "Exodus," that it is still as difficult as in the earlier stages of the discussion to say with certainty where the true interests of the country lie. There is of course, to begin with, the diametrical opposition of opinion and sentiment as to the very nature of those interests. Every encouragement is given on the one hand to the cultivation of a national pessimism in the agricultural element, which, it is confidently maintained, can only find relief from its disadvantages in unrestricted reciprocity. On the other hand it is difficult to resist the conviction that the "market of 60,000,000" is largely made up of those who, like our own farmers, are themselves producers of a surplus of the same staples. It is drummed into our ears, somewhat *ad nauseam*, that our farms are heavily mortgaged, and are being deserted after a fashion so wholesale that, if the allegation were not exaggerated, the country could not show the amount of prosperity it does, or indeed show anything but the evidences of universal ruin and desolation; while all accounts agree that mortgages are heavier and more plentiful in a very large proportion of the States, and a writer of repute in the April number of the *American Magazine* gives the following graphic account of the state of much vaunted New England:—

"The cultivation of the soil, we have been taught to believe, is the true foundation of national prosperity. If this theory is correct, the fact is, to say the least, startling, that the population of the hill-towns of New England is steadily declining, and its farming lands are becoming unkept wildernesses. Vast areas in Connecticut and Massachusetts formerly covered with fruitful meadows and grain-fields are now 'unprofitably gay' with tenacious sumac and odorous fern. The once cultivated land is occupied by bush and brake, and the woodman plies his axe where seventy-five years ago were heard the ring of scythe and the rustle of the sickle."

We can but hint at—we are unable even to faintly outline—this phase of the question, i. e. that between farmer and farmer of Canada and America respectively, and we seem to want more reliable information than is yet available to form a sound judgment on this part of the complicated question.

Meantime the phase originally started (with much evidence of its being the production of an interested clique) under the name Commercial Union, seems to have fallen dead. Involving, as it was made to do, the pooling of customs receipts and the dispensation of the proceeds from Washington, no one probably now remains blind to the fact that it meant simply annexation, and its promoters have made a strenuous endeavor to indoctrinate the public mind with the idea that any feeling for Canadian nationality which is supposed to conflict with "dimes," is mere "sentiment." Whether a patriotic sentiment has or has not reached the stage of atrophy desired by this party may be a matter of doubt, but we are inclined to believe that it is still strong enough to decisively reject the vassalage to the States involved in the *prima facie* aspect of the scheme, and its inevitable result if it were achieved. To its achievement, however, there is the further obstacle of the somewhat unpleasant temper of a very large section of Americans, which has assumed a dictatorial and overbearing note, no doubt much fostered and encouraged by the un-Canadian tone of a considerable portion of the Canadian press. It is doubtful if this confident and arrogant forestalling of the future will commend closer relations with the States to the Canadian who is attached to his country.

With regard to Unrestricted Reciprocity, which has some very desirable aspects, there are two very serious questions. The falling off of customs revenue would seem to necessitate recourse to direct taxation, and direct taxation, tho' we believe in it, is a measure evidently too drastic to suit the

present condition of the public taste or digestion, and a certain amount of revenue we cannot do without.

The second question is that of Canadian Manufactures, and Canadian national ideas are again involved in this. Whatever may be the prevailing estimate of the value to us, or the gratification of developing for ourselves our enormous manufacturing facilities, foregone experience assures us that so soon as the United States is relieved from Canadian duties our manufactures would, as they have before, either vanish from the face of the country or fall into the hands of American capitalists.

The outcry of the fruit-tree interests plainly indicates the general dismay with which all our manufacturers would contemplate American competition. Meantime there is reason to fear that the home market, with our present population, is too limited to be free from a constant danger of over-production. That an acute and impatient sense of disadvantage under these complications has been forced to a premature head is, we consider, like the uneasiness of the Indians and Half-breeds, partly (and principally) chargeable to the unscrupulous blatancy of party politics. American intrigue, engendered by disgust at the completion of the C. P. R., has also perhaps a good deal to do with it.

It would, we think, have been quite possible to go on as we were going, in peace and quietness, for a few years longer, if the country had not been persistently irritated into believing itself bankrupt, ruined and helpless, in spite of a great deal of evidence to the contrary. Had this breathing time been allowed, every year would have seen Canada stronger in population, and her resources correspondingly developed.

But discontent and impatience have been sowed, and, for good or for evil, we find ourselves precipitated to the premature consideration of the alternatives of Imperial Federation, Independence or Annexation, on which our limitations of space preclude our touching further at present.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

We may well be excited to impatience at the protracted existence of our insignificant and useless Upper Chambers, when Conservative England, under a Conservative Government, is moving with considerable energy in the direction of a reform of the House of Lords which promises to be radical. Propositions are thickening fast, and it is not a little to the credit of peers and prospective peers that action has come from among themselves. The Duke of Marlborough long ago wrote on the subject, and it is only to be regretted that his influence is not what his ability should make it. Those others whose serious study of the question entitles them to respectful hearing are, most of them as it happens, Conservatives. Lord Roseberry is an exception, but even he is not a destructive radical. Lord Dunraven, who has held office in a Conservative Administration, has introduced a Bill which will propound a definite scheme, as has also Mr. George Curzon, the eldest son of a peer, with the collaboration of Mr. St. John Broderick, another eldest son of a peer, and Lord Salisbury has declared his readiness to consider any definite propositions.

We are not familiar with the provisions of Lord Dunraven's bill, which was not printed at the time the information of which we avail ourselves was issued, but Mr. Curzon's was. This gentleman's measure seems to us somewhat complicated and lacking in thoroughness; still it evinces a sincere desire for substantial reform. In one respect all the reformers take common ground in the desire "not only to exclude 'black sheep,' but to include only such sheep as are eminently qualified for admission to the fold." Mr. Curzon's measure proposes several restrictions and curtailments of the prescription of hereditary right to a summons as a Lord of Parliament, but, as before observed, they seem unnecessarily complicated, and give the effect of substituting minute and precise, but unimportant, detail for the assertion of a broad and simple principle. It is not at all worth while to go into them, but his proposed mode of dealing with the non-hereditary element has some interest.

The number of the peers he would increase by the addition of fifty nominees of the crown (which of course means nominees of the ministry) to the existing Lords of Appeal. This would be a quite unnecessary strengthening of the legal element. To those he would add an at present indeterminate number, fifty of which should be elected by the House of Commons, but not taken from its sitting members, a proposal open to many objections, and somewhat far-fetched.

He would also have the colonies represented, a not unreasonable idea, which, however, it is remarked, might be met by the simple expedient of allowing the Agents General to be *ex officio* entitled to sit and vote. Whether this is necessary at all is another question. There is a difference of opinion also as to the representation of County Councils. These are some of the points indicative of the general direction of opinion, which, altho' running in different channels, all converge to the one end of popularization.

In dealing with the Bishops, Mr. Curzon would reduce the representation of the church to the number of twelve. He proposes to retain the two Archbishops, and the Bishops of the three senior dioceses—London, Durham and Winchester—who are at present entitled *ex officio* to seats, and would empower the 28 Bishops not so privileged, to elect one-fourth of their number at the beginning of each Parliament to serve with them.

English statesmen relinquish traditional ideas very slowly and with infinite caution, but far-seeing men cannot blind themselves to the inevitable dissolution of the bond between church and state, and we are much mistaken if the full opening up and discussion of the reform question do not lead to the entire exclusion of the former from political influence. The consistency of the Bishops in obstructiveness has attained the standard of perfection, and all thinkers of the day who think deeply enough, agree that their permitted interference with legislation is an anachronism,